CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

LORD VISCOUNT SACKVILLE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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LORD VISCOUNT

SACKVILLE.

SED MAXIME SOLUTUM ET SINE OBTRECTATORE FUIT PRODERE DE IIS, QUOS MORS ODIO AUT GRATIÆ EXEMISSET.

(Cremutius Cordus ap. Tacit. Ann. lib. 4.)

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W. Musgrave.

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LORD VISCOUNT SACKVILLE.

WHOEVER ſtands forth as the advocate of a great man's fame, whilſt he is living, will hardly gain credit for his motives, be they ever ſo ſincere; but it is to be hoped there is no ſuch riſque in deſcribing the real merits of one, whom death has removed from all ſenſe of human kindneſs, and who has left this world with ſuch prejudices againſt his memory, that the ſurviving friend who publiſhes theſe truths in his defence, would better conſult his own intereſts by ſuppreſſing them.

As it is an inviolable principle with me, to bring no man's name before the public without committing my own, I have ſubſcribed this paper; and having ſo done, I hope I may claim belief in the two following aſſertions;—firſt, that I have in no inſtance of my life been a party-writer, or ever publiſhed one line in defence of Lord Sackville, or in praiſe or diſpraiſe of his or any other man's perſon or politics;—ſecondly, that in what I now ſhall ſay of him, I have ſpoken the truth conſcientiouſly, to the beſt of my knowledge and belief, without flattery or diſguiſe.

If malice, which is not apt to ſpend its ſhafts upon thoſe who cannot feel the wound, will ſuffer this teſtimony to paſs undiſputed, thoſe who were inclined to think favorably of him will be pleaſed to find they had grounds for their candour; if otherwiſe, it will not be the firſt time that, in the purſuit of truth, I have found myſelf on the unpopular ſide of a queſtion.

It was Lord Sackville's fate to act for ſeveral years in a reſponſible office during an

an unpopular and unproſperous war. In the evil temper of thoſe times, it is not to be wondered at, if a Miniſter, at once ſo efficient and ſo out of favour with the public, had a full ſhare of perſonal rancour and animoſity from the opponents to his meaſures. I think however they did not attack him on the ſcore of capacity; his abilities were probably too well eſtabliſhed for their purpoſe; but as they could not deny that he was a capable man, they could inſinuate that he was a cunning one, and by this miſconſtruction of truth, though they could not remove it out of their own way, they contrived to turn it againſt him.

I need not remark how often opinions of men's characters are taken up upon diſtant and exterior views only; and it muſt be confeſſed that, in this inſtance, appearances were more in favour of the falſe impreſſion than of the truth; for he was of a grave and thoughtful caſt, mixed but little with the world at large, and his manners and deportment had not the eaſy freedom of the preſent faſhion; he talked

little, and his opinions, being expreſſed without circumlocution or heſitation, ſtamped an air of forethought and reflection upon what he ſaid, which might be charged to the account of ſtudied preparation and deliberate deſign: he gave much matter in few words, and as he ſeldom, if ever, betrayed a heat of temper, a falſe concluſion might be drawn, that becauſe he controuled his paſſions, he diſguiſed his heart: nothing could be more oppoſite to his real character: the fact is, ſincerity was his nature; reſerve, contracted by long exile from ſociety, was the reſult of his misfortunes.

He was brought up at Weſtminſter ſchool, and took his degrees in the Univerſity of Dublin; but the early avocations of a military life, and perhaps a want of taſte and diſpoſition for claſſical ſtudies, prevented his advances in literature, ſo that in fact he was not ſo well read as people of his rank and condition ought to be, and indeed generally are; but he knew his weakneſs in this particular, and, tho' a willing hearer when theſe topics were in converſation,

converſation, never ventured beyond his knowledge. In the modern hiſtory of nations, and particularly of his own, he was uncommonly correct; of the memoirs of illuſtrious perſons, intereſting anecdotes and events, he had a fertile ſtock in memory, and with ſingular preciſion of facts and dates; of many conſiderable affairs within his own time he had perſonal knowledge, many others (and ſeveral of a curious and ſecret nature) he had collected from the beſt authorities: he had a happy talent for relating, and having always been given to enquiry and reſearch, poſſeſſing withal a very retentive memory, he may fairly be accounted one of the very beſt companions of the age, though he had neither the advantages of literature, the brilliancy of wit, nor any ſuperior pretenſions to a fine taſte in the elegant arts: it is therefore much to be lamented, that theſe pleaſant and engaging qualifications for ſociety were ſo ſparingly diſplayed; and that habit had ſo contracted his circle, that he could not afterwards, without violence to his nature, extend and enlarge it.

This was conſtant matter of regret to me through the whole courſe of my intimacy with him; and I lamented that any man, poſſeſſing ſuch a fund of information, with a benevolence of ſoul that comprehended all mankind, a temper moſt placid, and a heart moſt ſocial, ſhould ſuffer in the world's opinion by that obſcurity, to which his ill fortune, not his natural diſpoſition, had reduced him; for I am verily perſuaded that his bittereſt defamers, even the anonymous ſlanderers that raked into the very dregs of infamy and pollution to aſperſe his character, would have repented had they known him.

He was ſo little uſed to receive juſtice from mankind, that perhaps he was overgrateful for common appprobation; and praiſe, if by chance he ever met it, ſeemed to take his ſenſes by ſurpriſe: if there has been any man therefore, who for ſelfiſh purpoſes aſſailed his temper by flattery, it was a baſe and cowardly act; becauſe when we attack a man upon that weak quarter which his misfortunes have left undefended, it is aiming our blows at a wound,

when

when we cannot conquer by fair fighting. I ſtate this not ſo much for the purpoſe of applying the obſervation to him, as in general mitigation for human weakneſs, when a perſecuted character has been too rigidly condemned for taking ſhelter in the ſoothing flattery of a favorite.

He had enough of that good-natured companionable vanity, which delights in doing what it does well, to be very ſufficiently communicative of what he knew; but he was incapable of laying traps for diſcourſe, or putting other people's converſation aſide to make room for his own; as he never obtruded, ſo he never tired: he poſſeſſed to admiration that rare faculty of always ſaying enough, and not too much, on a ſubject; his obſervation was ſo quick, and his feelings ſo ſenſitive, that he could nicely diſcriminate between the pleaſure and the politeneſs of his company, and he never failed to ſtop before the former was exhauſted.

In argumentation no man went ſooner to the truth, or ſubmitted to conviction with a better grace: though he had the

gift

gift of ſeeing through a queſtion almoſt at a glance, yet he never ſuffered his diſcernment to anticipate another's explanation, or interrupted his argument, how tedious ſoever: If any one ſpoke with heat in diſpute, or raiſed his voice above its natural pitch, or if more than one ſpeaker talked at a time, it gave him great pain; theſe are defects in temper and manners too commonly met with in the world, but to which he never gave occaſion, by puſhing an advantage too hard upon any one: a ſingle word, or even an offer at interruption, ſtopt him in a moment, though in the middle of a ſentence; and this I have ſeen him bear repeatedly, and in very many different inſtances, without a ſymptom of peeviſhneſs, taking up his thoughts in the very place where he had left them, and reſuming his diſcourſe with perfect complacency. To ſift out the truth by diſcuſſion ſeemed his only object for conteſting any opinion; and whether that was attained by the reſult of his own or another's reaſoning, was a diſcovery he had ſo little deſire to arrogate to his own ſagacity, that

he

he was very ingenious in ſhifting it from himſelf to any other he converſed with; for he was an adept in that art, which tends to put others in humour with themſelves, and which I take to be of the true ſpecies of politeneſs, not laying out for admiration by diſplay.

To his own ideas he was little attached, to words not at all; and in delivering his thoughts generally choſe the plaineſt and commoneſt expreſſions, that could convey their meaning; in this particular he ſometimes fell below the dignity of the ſubject he was ſpeaking upon; for it was a point with him on all occaſions, to take the ſtraiteſt road to his object, rather than a circuitous one, though ever ſo flowery. I believe he was never guilty, either in public or private, of ſpeaking for fame, or ſetting off a diſcourſe that means nothing with an air of pomp and myſtery; he had a dry way of ſtripping ſuch declamations to ſearch for facts, and would aſſert that fine words were not meant to be underſtood; but was particularly pleaſed when merchants or men of buſineſs explained

naturally to his comprehenſion; and when ſtate-meaſures were to be communicated to any ſuch for their guidance and inſtruction, he expreſſed himſelf in the ſame natural manner, openly and fairly, without affectation, ambitious only to be thoroughly underſtood as to what would be done, and what would not be done, ſo that they might thereupon determine what was moſt adviſeable for their own intereſts and concerns. In perſpicuity he has never been excelled, in proof of which I believe it is not remembered in Parliament (and probably not in Council), that he was ever called upon a ſecond time to explain what he had left obſcure and imperfect; his errors, on the contrary, were the errors of ſincerity; and I dare ſay there have been moments, when his colleagues in office could have forgiven him, if he had been leſs direct and explicit in reply; but if he was not to be ſtiled a fine ſpeaker, he was a very ready firm debater, and though he never dealt in flowery periods, made no attack upon the paſſions, no ſtudied declamations, yet he had great judgment and

method in his argument, ſaw the ſtrong and the feeble of a queſtion with much penetration, knew what he ought to preſs, and where he ought to give way; and in giving meaſures a facility, by the choice of the beſt moment for their introduction or proſecution, no man had more ſkill and addreſs.

He was generally repreſented as a proud and diſtant man, but in fact he had no more pride at heart, than every man of honour carries about him, and which ſerves to repel every thing that inclines towards meanneſs with becoming indignation; upon firſt approaches he had certainly an air of reſerve, tempered however with much politeneſs, for he was a high-bred gentleman, or would have been ſo eſteemed at leaſt in any age but the preſent, for his manners, it muſt be owned, were not the manners of the reigning faſhion; his reſerve however, which was more of a penſive than proud complexion, ſoon wore off in converſation, and he was ſpeedily diſpoſed, from the openneſs of his own heart, to credit others for the ſincerity of

theirs: He was ſo far from a cunning man, that, conſidering the danger of late times, and the delicacy of the affairs he was engaged in, I doubt if he was always ſufficiently cautious; if he had not had a quick inſight into characters, he was naturally more direct than would have been ſafe with reſpect to himſelf, or conſiſtent with his ſituation,

He had all the requiſites of a great miniſter, unleſs popularity and good luck are to be numbered amongſt them: In punctuality, preciſion, diſpatch and integrity, he was not to be ſurpaſſed; he was fitted both by habit and temper for buſineſs; no man could have fewer avocations, whether natural or artificial, for he was ſlave to no paſſion or exceſs, indulged no humour, unleſs that of regularity may be called a humour, which he obſerved to a ſcrupulous minuteneſs; and as for his domeſtic affairs, they were in ſuch a train of order and œconomy, that they demanded little of his attention: He had ſtudied the finances of the nation, and her reſources both in war and peace; had taken uncommon

pains

pains to obtain authentic and early intelligence of the councils and operations of foreign ſtates, and readily diſcerned how the intereſts of this country were affected thereby. He was of an active indefatigable mind: intemperance never diſturbed his faculties; neither avarice nor ambition corrupted them; eaſy in his private circumſtances, and totally void of every wiſh to accumulate, his zeal for his country, and his application to buſineſs, were not ſubject to be diverted from their proper exertions: A ſcene of activity was what he delighted in, for he was full of operation and project, and of a ſpirit ſo incapable of deſpondency, that difficulties and dangers, which would have depreſſed ſome men, ſerved to animate him.

In the interchange of confidence with him it was neceſſary to have no reſerve or holding back of circumſtances, for he had ſuch power of ſeeing into the heart of hypocriſy, and his own was ſo free from duplicity, that on ſuch occaſions you muſt impart the whole or nothing; when this was fairly done, he was your own to all

honeſt intents, and (humanly ſpeaking) to all time; for he was a ſteady faithful friend: His mind was ſo ſtrong, that it could not eaſily be overburthened by the weight of affairs, ſo clear that the variety of them was not apt to perplex it: He could ſhift his attention from one thing to its oppoſite with ſingular facility; he wiſhed to do buſineſs, not to dwell upon it; and as his punctuality, as I before obſerved, went with the hand of the clock to the very point of the minute, he was pleaſant to all who ſerved with him, or were dependant on his motions, and their hours of relaxation were hours of ſecurity.

The eſtabliſhment of his houſehold and domeſtics was upon a noble ſcale, in fact it was the model of a liberal œconomy: He was a friend and father to his ſervants; their health, their exerciſes and even their amuſements, were objects of his attention, and a more orderly and happy family did not exiſt. When I ſpeak of his bounty and humanity to his poor neighbours and dependants in the counties where he reſided, it is with pleaſure

I inſiſt

I inſiſt on ſo meritorious a part of his character. Charity was in him no leſs the exerciſe of the judgment than of the heart, for he gave his relief to the real wants, not to the mere importunities of the needy: money was ſeldom the vehicle he employed to convey that relief; a conſtant reſource in ſickneſs, caſualty, or misfortune, was to be found with him, and it was part of his family eſtabliſhment to be always provided for ſuch occaſions: As his eye was ever upon the poor, all their comforts, their induſtry, and even their morals, paſſed under his inſpection, and were influenced by it; his charity was without oſtentation, and the extent of his good deeds could only be computed by the lamentations and number of thoſe who followed his body to the grave.

The ſame Providence, that gave him ſtrength to endure, laid afflictions upon him to put that ſtrength to the trial: I am warranted in ſaying they neither hardened his heart, depreſſed his ſpirit, nor ſoured his temper: It was his countenance, not his tongue, that ever uttered a complaint;

his

his friends were welcomed with the ſame hoſpitable ſmile, and his family enjoyed the ſame unchangeable ſerenity under all events; if perſecution and unkindneſs had been capable of relenting, his patience would have moved them to it.

The cry of the world is not always the opinion of the world, at leaſt not of the wiſeſt part of it; the records are in hand, and the facts cannot be perverted or evaded, by which future times muſt decide, whether he, who was ſo chief an actor in thoſe unhappy ſcenes, and bore ſuch a proportion of the public odium during the war of the Colonies, ſhall receive the praiſe or cenſure of poſterity: He will not enter upon his ſhare in that unfortunate hiſtory, till the whole was in action and haſtening to its cataſtrophe; in the antecedent meaſures, which have ſuch connexion with the cauſes and precipitation of the revolt, he has no concern; he properly ſhares the reſponſibility of that Cabinet of which he was a member; and if there was any negligence or error, any want of proper diſpatch and exertion, any corruption,

ignorance, or abuſe, within his particular department, for all ſuch (if any there were) he is ſingly anſwerable; hitherto we have heard little but the language of prejudice; a ſhort time will bring the queſtion fairly into judgment, and when the heat of paſſion has ſubſided, truth will ſtate, and reaſon will decide.

There are other unfortunate events in his life, which muſt be referred to the ſame diſtant teſt and examination. They, who have ſerved with him in the war preceding the laſt, are beſt able to ſpeak of his military anecdotes: he ſerved with great reputation under the Dukes of Cumberland and Marlborough, in Germany, Scotland, and France; there are paſſages enough in his campaigns, which put his courage out of all diſpute; I think it is unneceſſary to produce them merely for the object of confuting a ſlanderous inſinuation, which none but vulgar minds could adopt, and which was never echoed for any purpoſes but of temporary defamation. He was ſhot in the breaſt at the head of Barrel's regiment in the memorable battle of

Fontenoy, and ſaw that brave regiment almoſt totally cut to pieces; if I am rightly informed, only three officers marched unwounded off the field: at the battle of Minden, he was marked by implication in the public orders of Prince Ferdinand of Brunſwick; he appealed to a court-martial, was tried, ſentenced, and diſgraced. I have no further concern with this or any other event of his life, but as it may involve ſome good or evil quality of his mind, and affect his private character; in this light I preſume it is not improper to compare his ſituation in the two actions above mentioned, eſpecially where a crime has been ſuggeſted againſt him, very foreign from his nature, and very different from the reaſons upon which he ſuffered ſentence; this, and this only, is the point to which I addreſs myſelf; not to his rightful judges, for that would be the heighth of indecency, but to thoſe who, without right to judge, condemned without reaſon; and to ſuch I may be allowed to ſay, that the ſituation of Lord Sackville, commanding a ſingle regiment at Fontenoy,

under

under an Engliſh prince and general, was very different from his ſituation at Minden, commanding the Britiſh forces under a foreign prince and general: in the former caſe his duty was only that of an officer; it was ſimply to fight, and to obey, and that duty he performed; in the latter his duty was that of a general, accountable to his country for ſomething more than his conduct in the hour of battle, for his counſels and opinions, and many other complicated and delicate affairs, in all which a man, whoſe zeal for the peculiar intereſts of his own country exceeded any conſiderations that reſpected himſelf only, muſt be ſubjected to dangers that need not be pointed out; in ſuch circumſtances a ſubordinate general, though of the ſame nation with his ſuperior, has not always thought in harmony with him, and I believe the conſequences have generally proved fatal to one party or the other.

I have ſeen him in moments of imminent danger, both perſonal and political, and never had occaſion to doubt of the firmneſs of his mind; I know not how

elſe he could have ſupported himſelf againſt ſuch continued perſecution: I think this circumſtance alone would mark his fortitude to the conviction of every conſiderate man, for his deportment was exactly ſuch as innocence and a clear conſcience will inſpire; there was no inſolence, no ferocity in it, ſuch as detected characters can aſſume, when they have caſt away ſhame, and hardened themſelves againſt infamy; his ſerenity, on the contrary, accompanied him through life, and was particularly conſpicuous at the cloſe of it.

He underwent an irkſome oppoſition, when the favour of his ſovereign promoted him to a ſeat in the Houſe of Peers: it was one of the laſt and moſt painful trials of his life: the tranſaction is ſo recent, that I may be excuſed from any further mention of it. He did not long enjoy his hard-earned honours. He ſupported the king's miniſters in all public meaſures, except thoſe relative to the Iriſh propoſitions, in which he took a part, not of purpoſed oppoſition, but of fair and deliberate opinion; he had given his beſt and

fulleſt attention to the ſubject in all its branches, and expected its iſſue with the utmoſt anxiety. Some time before the concluſion of the ſeſſion he was ſeized with the ſymptoms of his laſt illneſs, in which ſtage of his complaint, if he could have been perſuaded to retire from his duty in parliament, he might probably have found a remedy in the air and retirement of the country; but he perſiſted ſo long in his attendance upon this important buſineſs, that his complaint gathered upon him, and his pains grew ſo troubleſome, that when he came at laſt into the country, he did not experience that relief which was hoped for; notwithſtanding this, although repoſe was ſo neceſſary for his condition, his zeal carried him again to town in a very unfit ſtate for the undertaking: he ſpoke upon the queſtion with greater agitation of mind, and more at length, than was common with him, and the houſe being hot and crowded, he found himſelf ſo exhauſted at the concluſion of his ſpeech, that it was with difficulty he was ſaved from fainting on the ſpot: the ſitting was

very

very long, and he returned to his family very materially altered in his health for the worſe.

From this period he conſidered his caſe as without cure, feeling thoſe ſymptoms of internal decay which he was ſatisfied were beyond the reach of medicine; in this perſuaſion, he even apologized to his phyſician for the fruitleſs trouble he was giving him: he endured a ſucceſſion of wearisome pains with ſingular ſerenity and compoſure of mind; his ſenſes were firm and unimpaired to the laſt; and he was occupied almoſt without intermiſſion in fulfilling the duties of a father, a friend, and a Chriſtian*: it ſhould ſeem as if all the

* I was preſent whilſt the Holy Sacrament was adminiſtered to him, two days before his death: he cauſed his windows and bed-curtains to be thrown open, and exerted himſelf to the utmoſt on that awful occaſion; he received the Elements with a devotion and fervor, expreſſive of ſuch inward peace and even gladneſs of heart, as are the ſtrongeſt of all human evidences of an eaſy conſcience and a well-prepared mind. His laſt words to me are a further indication of this, and, as nearly as I can repeat them, were as follow — "You ſee me now in thoſe moments, when "no

the preceding ſorrows of his life were repaid to him by that extraordinary ſupport and comfort which Providence vouchſafed to him in his laſt days. It is not in my remembrance, through the courſe of my acquaintance with him, ever to have heard a word from his lips that could give offence to decency or religion; but in this latter period, of which I am ſpeaking, and throughout which I conſtantly attended him, his ſentiments were of that exalted and ſuperior kind, as to render the ſpectacle of his death one of the moſt edifying contemplations of my life.

I have now the pleaſing ſatisfaction to know, that it was not without reaſon I thought well of one, whom too many conſpired to traduce. Having ſurvived my friend, I now enjoy the only reward which a diſin-

"no diſguiſe will ſerve, and when the ſpirit of a man "muſt be proved; I have a mind perfectly reſigned, "and at peace within itſelf: I have no more to do "with this world, and what I have done in it, I have "done for the beſt; I hope and truſt I am prepared "for the next. Tell not me of all that paſſes in health "and pride of heart, theſe are the moments in which "a man muſt be ſearched;—and remember, that I die, "as you ſee me, happy and content."

a diſintereſted attachment can look to—the reward of finding the opinion I had conceived of his virtues juſtified to my own conviction; and of being conſcious that I am ſtrictly fulfilling the duties of an honeſt man, when I lay before the public this ſmall but ſincere tribute to his memory.

RICHARD CUMBERLAND.